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But we are not there yet. And so this idea of trying to bring this in front of courts, we shouldn't have to do that. We should be able to defend our own turf. But it is frustrating because we don't have a lot of other options at this point.

So I think that my colleague from South Carolina, you know, I give him credit for thinking of what can we actually do that could potentially be successful. And so I am hoping that this move will be successful.

But I think, going forward—and this has been a problem before this President. He is not the only one who has pulled stunts like this, although I think he has gone beyond what any previous President has done.

Ultimately, people in this body and in the other Chamber have got to get serious about defending our constitutional responsibility. That means holding Presidents accountable who are not in accordance with article II, section 3, the "Take Care" clause. But it also means not delegating so much legislative authority to these bureaucracies when they end up essentially legislating, and those rules are imposed on the public without Congress saying anything at all about it.

So, ultimately, the courts cannot save us if we aren't willing to save ourselves and protect the authority that the Constitution grants us and that we are supposed to exercise on behalf of the people that we represent.

We are, especially in this House, we are the people's House. The President gets elected, too, but we are the closest to the people, and I think we have got to do a better job of this going forward.

So I would just tell my friend from South Carolina, Thank you for doing this. I know you have signed on. I have a resolution just to say that the House doesn't approve of this conduct, because I fear if we don't do anything, then we are basically setting a precedent where this is going to be unquestioned going forward.

So I think as much as we can do, even if we are not successful, at least we are showing people that we think this is a contested practice, and we are not willing to allow this to become something that is accepted for future Presidents, Republican or Democrat.

Mr. RICE of South Carolina. I thank my friend from Florida.

Separation of powers is fundamental to our form of government. The Congress enacts laws. The President enforces the laws. One individual who can both make the law and enforce it is more a monarch than a President.

Without the separation of powers, our form of government crumbles. As earlier speakers said, the erosion of the separation of powers didn't start with President Obama, but it has certainly accelerated. At home I am asked all the time, The President is breaking the law; why don't you do something about it? This resolution is an attempt to do exactly that.

Nobody would argue that the President has no discretion in enforcing the law. Clearly, he does. But in these four instances, he has clearly overstepped that discretion.

I fall back to say, what would we say if the President has the power to waive these things, the employer mandate, the penalty under the employer mandate, that is a waiver of a tax? What would we say if the next President waived the capital gains tax, or waived the maximum bracket under the income tax, or waived the income tax for his friends?

Clearly, that is beyond the discretion of the President. Clearly, President Obama has gone beyond his discretion, and Congress needs to enforce the Constitution.

We have 44 cosponsors to our bill so far, but we need the help of the American people. We need you to talk to your Representatives. If you need more information about our resolution or what you can do, please go to my Web site at www.rice.house.gov.

Thank you for your concern. Thank you for viewing. Let's protect our democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members must address their remarks to the Chair and not to a perceived viewing audience.

THE CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. POCAN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. POCAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on behalf of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. During our Special Order hour, we want to talk specifically about the need for unemployment insurance but, more broadly, about what we need to do to make sure that everyone in this country has access to opportunity.

Just yesterday, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the war on poverty. President Johnson said, during his State of the Union in 1964:

Unfortunately, many Americans live on the outskirts of hope, some because of their poverty, and some because of their color, and all too many because of both. Our task is to help replace their despair with opportunity.

This administration today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty in America. It will not be a short or easy struggle. No single weapon or strategy will suffice, but we shall not rest until that war is won. The richest nation on Earth can afford to win it. We cannot afford to lose it.

Those are the words of President Johnson 50 years ago when we started the war on poverty in this country. We created Medicare and Medicaid, the food stamp program and programs like Head Start. And we have great results from those programs.

In fact, according to a new study, these initial programs, coupled with

expansion of pro-work and pro-family programs, like the earned income tax credit, have helped reduce poverty by nearly 40 percent since the 1960s. The poverty line fell from 26 percent in 1967 to 16 percent in 2012, when the safety net is taken into account.

Now, while there has been a lot of progress, we still have far too many people in this country who are still living in poverty or on the brink of living in poverty. Fifteen percent of Americans today are living below the poverty line, and that is just \$11,490 for an individual. 46.5 million people in our country are living in poverty, and one in three Americans teeters on the brink of living in poverty. That includes 16 million children in this country. That is more than 700,000 people in my home State of Wisconsin.

According to the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in Rock County, in my district, a county that I share with Congressman PAUL RYAN, 22 percent of the children in that county are living in poverty.

We still have vast inequality, income inequality. We have unlivable wages. And we still have Members of this body, Mr. Speaker, who want to chip away at that very economic security. It almost seems like today it is not a war on poverty, but sometimes it seems like there is a war on the war on poverty, that we are actually stepping backwards from the very improvements we made over the years from 1960.

In fact, what we noticed that just happened was the not extending of the benefits, emergency unemployment benefits back in December, on December 28. It has affected 1.3 million Americans. Not only do we have issues like that, but we also have an attack on food stamps, where this very body has voted to cut \$39 billion from the SNAP program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—\$39 billion—affecting millions and millions of Americans.

We have seen attempts to not allow us to raise the minimum wage, a minimum wage that is entirely behind where it should be. If you took into consideration where it should be, just for inflation from 1968, that minimum wage in 2013 dollars would be at \$10.60—not \$7.25, at \$10.60. We are way behind keeping up with inflation.

Income inequality is at an all-time high. We are finding that incomes for the top 1 percent have grown more than 31 percent since 2009, and the bottom 99 percent of people, their income has moved less than 1 percent. So we are in a challenging time.

We know that there was an economic downfall across the globe, and especially hard hit, we feel it in this country. And while we are having dual activities happen, jobs are creeping back up, we are having progress, but still, 7 percent of people are unemployed.

And while we have got those jobs creeping up, we still also notice that

people are being left behind with this economy, and that is exactly why we have tried to do things like extending the unemployment insurance benefits for people.

But unfortunately, in this body, in this very body, Mr. Speaker, austerity has ruled the day. Austerity has taken place, instead of prosperity. Instead of doing measures that would lift people out of poverty and help people get a job and help people be able to support their families, we are trying to take government down and down and down, like they did in Europe, and they have had disastrous results from doing that.

That is not a path out of our current economic condition. We need to be investing in our people so that they have those opportunities. They can grab a ring at that ladder and get a good job and be able to get by. So there are so many things we need to do.

Unfortunately, these attacks aren't just in this body, in the Congress. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, these attacks are even happening in the States.

In my home State of Wisconsin, our Governor, Scott Walker, was recently on a CNN program. And when he was asked about extending unemployment benefits, his response was, the reason why the White House is so actively pursuing this, unemployment insurance, is they want to desperately talk about anything but ObamaCare.

Can you believe the Governor of a State who is 37th in job creation, who promised when he was elected to create 250,000 jobs, and he has done a portion of that, is somehow trying to say that helping people to get out of poverty, helping people to be able to support their family with groceries and to be able to pay their rent or mortgage, at a time of still having record people who are out of work, while we are trying to start getting jobs to come back, at 7 percent, at that time, Mr. Speaker, that Governor can still only talk about ObamaCare, as all too often this body has done.

We need to act now. The time to act on this, for this body, is now. 1.3 million people are currently out of work and trying to get those benefits they need so desperately during that period that have been cut off. And every week, across the country, 72,000 new Americans will lose their benefits if we don't do something—72,000 thousand people across the country.

Mr. Speaker, in our Speaker of the House's district alone, you look at the largest cities in that district in Ohio: Springfield, Ohio, 60,000 people, that would be like having your entire city of Springfield go unemployed in a single week; in the city of Hamilton, 62,000 people, 1 week, all out of work; Middleton, 48,000 people, you can take that and the surrounding communities, all in 1 week, out of work if we don't do something.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that this body do something. 1.3 million Americans have lost these benefits at the end of December, in-

cluding 20,000 military veterans who aren't getting the benefits they need. These are hardworking people who are still trying to find jobs in this economy, but there are just not enough jobs yet available. And in many fields it is even tougher.

Right now, 24,000 Wisconsinites have lost these important, vital lifelines, and the number just keeps going up every single week by 72,000 people. Yet, Mr. Speaker, the House Republicans adjourned Congress on December 12, more than 2 weeks before these benefits were set to expire. We could have done something, we could have stayed and worked, and instead we didn't. Now, because of that, we have 1.3 million and counting people who don't have access to these vital benefits.

Now, let's just think about this. Under President Bush, five times we extended these benefits without any strings attached like this Congress is trying to do to this President, five times, and the unemployment was less than the 7 percent we are at right now. It is hypocritical for us not to do what we all did together five times under President Bush while people are still looking for work.

The bottom line is you still need this money, not just to pay for groceries and to pay for rent or your mortgage, but you need things to be able to get a job. If you don't have the ability to pay for gas in your car, how are you going to be able to find a job? You need to be able to have that car to go to interviews to find a job.

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You need to be able to pay for your phone so you can receive a phone call for these jobs. These are all reasons why we need to make sure those benefits are available for all too many people in this country.

There is also what happens to the economy when you don't have these benefits in place. Just in the first week since Congress cut off long-term unemployment, our local economies across America lost \$400 million of potential economic activity, and that is going to grow every single week. So it is a double-whammy: not only the people who are desperately looking for work, trying to find that job, not able to find that job, but we are also going to have even more people be unemployed because of the overall impact that has on the economy.

It has been said that 200,000 jobs would be lost in 2014, and we are going to decrease the gross domestic product simply by not doing these benefits. The bottom line is, there are so many reasons why we need to do this. Later, I am going to talk more about my State of Wisconsin and why it is important.

I am joined by one of my colleagues here today who is actually the cochair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, Representative RAÚL GRIJALVA. Representative GRIJALVA has served in Congress for six terms. He is a member of the Committee on Education and the

Workforce, and he also serves on the Committee on Natural Resources, where he is the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation.

He is a tremendous Member of Congress. He has been a mentor to many of us who are freshmen, who recently have joined, and is a very strong member of our Progressive Caucus, speaking on behalf of each and every American who needs opportunity. It is my pleasure to yield now to the gentleman from Arizona, Representative GRIJALVA.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Congressman, let me at the outset thank you for the opportunity to provide some clarity to the discussion and the lack of debate, many times, in this House about what is really important to the American people. That clarity is important to this whole Congress. It is important specifically to our Democrats and in particular to the Progressive Caucus, of which you are a member, and I want to thank you for that and for your efforts.

The Federal Emergency Unemployment Compensation program expired on the 28th because of a lack of action on the part of the majority—the majority being the Republicans—cutting off an average weekly benefit of \$300, as has been stated, to 1.3 million job seekers. Without that extension, another 72,000 Americans on average are estimated to lose their unemployment insurance every week during the first half of this new year.

All economists agree that providing extended unemployment benefits is one of the most effective job creation strategies available during a high period of joblessness. In this period of economic uncertainty, every \$1 of unemployment compensation creates 52 cents in additional economic activity beyond that dollar. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that extending benefits for another year will save 200,000 jobs.

The failure by the Republicans to extend Federal unemployment insurance at the end of last week is already taking more than \$400 million out of the pockets of American job seekers nationwide and State economies.

Unemployment insurance is viewed as a very effective stimulus because Americans without jobs tend to spend their unemployment insurance right away and on the very basic needs that they and their families need.

Democrats have called on Congress to extend the Federal emergency unemployment insurance program through 2014. Congress must act soon to restore those necessary benefits to the unemployed workers and to their families.

This economy still has 1 million fewer jobs than before the Great Recession began; 37 percent of the unemployed have been out of work for more than 6 months; almost 1.9 million more would lose their unemployment benefits in the first half of 2014, as their State benefits run out.

In my State of Arizona, the failure by the GOP, the Republicans, to reinstate and extend the unemployment compensation benefits directly affected 17,100 unemployed workers in Arizona. An additional 22,500 unemployed workers will lose their benefits in the first 6 months of 2014 if this Congress does not act.

Arizona has an average of an 8.3 percent unemployment rate throughout the State. There has been a 20 percent reduction in unemployment benefits to these workers since 2011. So we stand a chance, in Arizona, to save up to 2,000 jobs and reinstate for 17,000 people their unemployment benefits if this Congress were to act now.

We are here today, with the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. POCAN) managing this hour, to talk about the necessity and the urgency of the extension of unemployment benefits that has to be a priority for this Congress.

For those willing workers and their families, it is an essential, essential act by this Congress. These workers should not be pawns in political gamesmanship or in gotcha strategies by the Republicans to try to, in effect, embarrass the President. That does not need to be part of this equation. As Mr. POCAN pointed out, this has been dealt with in a bipartisan manner. This renewal, regardless of who has been in the White House, has been a response to the needs of the American people and their workers. I also believe that people receiving unemployment should not be subjected to punitive, mean-spirited requirements in order to receive that support.

We need action. We don't need posturing. We don't need empty preaching from the majority on extending unemployment benefits. That needs to be done and done immediately.

As we talk about unemployment benefits and their extension, I also want to mention that we have to realize that there is not a subtle or overly covert agenda at work here by the majority. We see the nonaction on unemployment, a vital and necessary response that, in the past, has been met with bipartisan support. We now see cuts amounting to \$20 billion in nutrition and basic sustenance support for people in need, the SNAP program in the farm bill. That cumulative effect of \$20 billion will affect many, many families, children, and adults throughout this country.

There is also a growing wage and income inequality and disparity in this country. That has been as a consequence of policies in which we reward those that are doing well—and God bless them, and they should do well, and we should be proud of them—we reward them with tax breaks, with loopholes, and with the ability to increase their income and their purchasing power while at the same time shifting the burden of responsibility for basic services in this country to hard-working, middle class people in this country. That income inequality is

possibly one of the most dangerous economic realities that is happening to this Nation, and that, too, is an agenda that is going on and continues to go on in the policies and the initiatives that are being promoted by the majority party in this House.

There is a huge need in this country for a livable minimum wage that pays people for the actual work that they do. We can't ignore the sequester cuts and how they have directly affected child care and the ability for parents, and particularly women, to be able to work and have some security that their children are being taken care of. The cuts in that area, in Head Start, in particular, are going to be devastating; early childhood education, the cuts in that area, and the freedom that it would provide parents to be able to feel secure about being at work while their children are learning and being taken care of.

The cuts in job training and the ability for people to seek new careers and change the orientation of where they are working, that has been cut. Public education, an investment strategy that, in hard economic times, has been critical to our country, again, is being cut. Access and affordability of higher education, again, being cut.

There has been no jobs bill. It was interesting to hear the Speaker of the House say the other day that it is the Democrats' fault that there is no jobs agenda that has been presented. There has been a jobs agenda presented over and over again by a variety of colleagues in this House, in the Senate, and by the administration. The inaction and them turning their face to that reality has been a consequence of the leadership in this House that has refused to deal with that.

Unemployment benefits are part of a greater crisis, a crisis of economic fairness in this country, a crisis that demands that this Congress look beyond its own rhetoric and look at the reality.

In my district, every time in our office people come in seeking help from us, and, invariably, the biggest request is, How can I find a job? How can I get trained for a new career? How can I get myself in a situation where I can go back to work and feel secure in taking care of and supporting my family? For single heads of households, it is the same issue.

I would suggest that if we really want to deal with the economics and not just provide rhetoric about jobs that we look at the first necessary step: extend these unemployment benefits, provide some security and some sustainability to millions of workers in this country, and then move on to the real agenda, which is to provide some fairness to these workers and some opportunities to these workers.

Again, Congressman POCAN, I appreciate the time and yield back.

Mr. POCAN. Thank you, Congressman GRIJALVA, for so articulately outlining the austerity policy of the House

Republican leadership and their stunning lack of ability to get anything done to help the 1.3 million people who are out of work and the 72,000 Americans each and every week that are going to lose their benefits if this House doesn't act.

It is now my pleasure to introduce a stalwart progressive in the U.S. Congress, the ranking member of the House Committee on Financial Services, as well as a member of the House Steering and Policy Committee. She is a member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus and was past chair of the Congressional Black Caucus. It is my honor to now yield to Representative MAXINE WATERS.

Ms. WATERS. I would certainly like to thank the gentleman from Wisconsin, Representative MARK POCAN, for yielding to me, and I congratulate him for organizing this Congressional Progressive Caucus Special Order on unemployment insurance.

Fifty years ago this weekend, in his the State of the Union address, President Lyndon B. Johnson declared a war on poverty. He introduced Federal legislation, even proposed State initiatives that would over time improve health, education, nutrition, and access to housing, employment, and economic opportunity.

Although America has changed a great deal since that day, poverty and economic inequality are still at the forefront of our Nation's problems. They are only exacerbated by the Great Recession. The gap between the rich and poor in America has become a chasm. Today, 20 percent of the income in our country goes to the top 1 percent of Americans, and the top 1 percent holds about 40 percent of the country's wealth. This inequality is mirrored in our communities, our housing and rental markets, and our financial system, where a lack of access to banking services often causes working families to have debts that spiral out of control.

Mr. Speaker, inequality in this country has reached a point that for many, the American Dream of upward mobility and unlimited economic opportunity has been greatly diminished.

The 2008 financial crisis cost our economy \$12 trillion, as millions lost their homes and jobs. This destruction of wealth disproportionately hurt our Nation's most vulnerable and only widened the gap between the rich and the poor. Even the gains from growth during the recent recovery have overwhelmingly benefited the wealthiest people in society.

Almost 95 percent of the income gains since the recovery began have been captured by the top 1 percent. Meanwhile, the minimum wage has not been increased since 2009. Mr. Speaker, this is totally unacceptable. Chronic unemployment and poverty still plague many of our communities. American families are still struggling to make ends meet. Four million Americans have been out of work for 27 weeks or

more, and the economy still has 1 million fewer jobs than before the Great Recession began.

□ 1800

Those there are other factors at play. Much of this inequality is a result of some of the government policies that we make, and government policy can help reverse these alarming trends.

But instead, our friends on the opposite side of the aisle are digging us deeper and deeper into this crisis. They passed the farm bill that cuts SNAP nutrition program for low-income families by \$40 billion, and then the Republicans let unemployment insurance for the long-term unemployment expire 3 days after Christmas.

Already, 1.3 million unemployed Americans have lost their Federal unemployment insurance. That includes 20,000 military veterans. Each day this program sits expired, thousands of additional struggling Americans are adversely affected.

As State benefits are exhausted in the first 6 months of 2014, an additional 1.9 million Americans will lose their unemployment insurance. In fact, every week another 72,000 job-seekers will lose their benefits during the first half of this year.

Mr. Speaker, unemployment insurance is critical to struggling families. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, unemployment insurance kept 2.5 million people above the poverty line in 2012, including 600,000 children.

Unemployment insurance is good for the economy. According to Moody's Analytics, every dollar of unemployment insurance generates \$1.55 in new economic activity in the first year. The bipartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that 200,000 jobs could be lost in our economy if unemployment insurance is not extended.

We must act and act immediately to extend unemployment insurance. So I call on my Republican colleagues to bring the Emergency Unemployment Compensation Extension Act, that is H.R. 3824, to the House floor and pass it now.

With one in five American children living in poverty, it is clear that the war on poverty has gone on for far too long. Let's take action now to have all Americans share in our Nation's growth and prosperity. Let's bring an unemployment extension bill to the floor, and let's bring it now. Let's bring a substantive jobs bill to the floor now, and let's bring a minimum wage increase to the floor now. American families have suffered enough. It is time to restore the American Dream.

As I wrap up, let me just say this on behalf of the American people. I hear these arguments every day from the opposite side of the aisle saying if you can continue to extend these unemployment benefits, you are simply going to undermine the will for people to go to work. What you are going to do is make them comfortable on these

unemployment benefits, and they won't go look for a job.

Well, I want to tell you I have not talked to everyone whose on unemployment or who needs extended benefits; but I can tell you this, American folks want jobs, they want to work, they want to earn a decent living, they want to earn wages to take care of their families and their children. Their aspirations and their goals are the same as yours and mine. They want what America has promised.

I would say to those who would continue this argument, don't disrespect the American people that way. Don't undermine the American people that way. Do what you know is right, what makes good sense, and let us help out those who are the most vulnerable, who need us now at this time so that they can continue to look for jobs, so that they continue to aspire to have the American Dream, and I thank you very much.

Mr. POCAN. Thank you so much, Representative WATERS. Your efforts over the years have been so appreciated by so many, and I hope the House Republican leadership will listen to your pleas and bring this to a vote.

It is now my honor to introduce one of my fellow freshmen who has rapidly been recognized not only for his hard work and effort, but for his skills, and his work on behalf so many across this country. I would like to yield some time to my colleague Representative JEFFRIES.

Mr. JEFFRIES. I thank the distinguished gentleman from Wisconsin, the Badger State, for his continued leadership, and each and every week when we are in session coming to the floor of the House of Representatives and articulating the progressive message for all to hear and for the good of the country. I appreciate you yielding some time during this Congressional Progressive Caucus Special Order.

This month we marked the 50th anniversary of the declaration of the war on poverty. We know that on January 8, 1964, President Lyndon Baines Johnson came to this very Chamber, spoke to a joint session of Congress, and laid out a series of initiatives designed to combat chronic poverty in this country.

As a result of this effort, there were many legislative battles that were won: in the march toward the creation of a Great Society, Medicare, Medicaid, Head Start, school breakfast program, the Food Stamp Act, minimum wage enhancement, Job Corps, college work study. These were programs all part of that Great Society era enacted between 1964 and 1966; and taken together with other war on poverty initiatives, they managed to rescue millions and millions of Americans from their impoverished condition and set them on a pathway toward the middle class.

Over the years, we have attempted to continue that war on poverty with great success such that the situation in America now is better than it was in

1964; yet we know that the war continues. Instead, it seems like as opposed to waging a war on poverty here in this Chamber, many of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle have decided to embark on a war against the poor, a war against middle class families and senior citizens, those who are striving to realize the full potential of the American Dream. And that's why we are also so troubled by the failure to extend long-term unemployment benefits.

Now, I arrived in this Chamber feeling as if I was prepared for the experience, given the professional and educational legislative experiences that I had had in advance of January 3, 2013. And it has been my honor and my privilege to work with such a tremendous class of freshmen.

I have been troubled over the last year by the fact that I appeared deficient in one area, and that is in my failure to have any meaningful experience in the art of hostage negotiation. But from the very beginning that I set forth in this Chamber, it seemed as if those skills were necessary in this climate.

In January of 2013, we had to wait more than 75 days before this House would pass a Superstorm Sandy relief package, unprecedented in the history of this Congress' response to a natural disaster because there were some who put forth a ransom note, demanding offsets, even though never had that happened in the history of the Republic.

Then several months later, in the run-up to October 1, you had an Affordable Care Act law passed by this Congress in 2010, signed by the President, declared constitutional by the Supreme Court in an opinion parenthetically written by Chief Justice John Roberts, and then reaffirmed with the overwhelming electoral college election of the President in 2012. Notwithstanding any of that, you had folks demanding an exchange for keeping the government open: that we either delay, destroy, or defund the Affordable Care Act. Again, a ransom note exercise.

Here we are, 1 year removed from my inaugural experience around the Superstorm Sandy debacle back again facing an almost unprecedented situation where the majority has said, in exchange for us renewing long-term unemployment benefits for Americans that reasonable people should conclude are in need, not only do we want a pay-for, almost unprecedented, the last 17 times that this has been extended, but we have got a whole list of ransom demands that we want enacted in order for us to rescue these Americans who are in distress.

I am just hopeful, Mr. Speaker, that we can get together subsequent to the United States Senate which has signaled and indicated its willingness to move forward, see to it that it shouldn't be the case that in exchange for taking a positive step forward in this institution, we always have to take two steps backward.

The positive step would simply be to renew the provision of unemployment benefits for the long term, individuals who have been working hard to find a job, and then coming together to figure out collectively how we can all move forward in the best interest of this country and our economy. I am hopeful that that will take place in the next day or week, certainly within the month, and we will continue to press forward in that regard.

With that, I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin for his continued leadership.

Mr. POCAN. Thank you, Representative JEFFRIES, and thank you for articulating, I guess, what I have been feeling also for the last year, my lack of hostage-taking skills. I certainly learned some in the last 12 months serving in this body.

It is now my pleasure to yield some time to my colleague from California, Representative LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD, who is the first Mexican American woman to be elected to Congress. She cofounded the bipartisan Congressional Study Committee on Public Health. She became the first woman to chair the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and serves as the chairwoman of their health care task force.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I want to commend Congressman POCAN for his leadership and his hard work on this very, very important issue.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of 1.4 million Americans who lost their emergency unemployment insurance during the holiday season and the millions of Americans who stand to lose their benefits in 2014 if Congress fails to extend unemployment insurance.

It is an insult to the American worker to oppose the extension of these benefits on the premise that emergency unemployment insurance provides a disincentive to work and that it makes unemployed Americans content to live off of the taxpayer-supported benefits.

The reality is, Mr. Speaker, that Americans have a strong work ethic and are the best and most productive in the world. And the reality is that in spite of their efforts to find employment. There are still 1.3 million fewer jobs today than there were when many of these Americans lost their jobs due to our country's economic downturn. It is unconscionable to punish those who lost their job through no fault of their own and continue to actively seek work.

With nearly three job-seekers for every available position, American workers are unemployed not because they are not motivated to work, but because there are simply not enough jobs for everyone who needs one. This problem is magnified in my home State of California where there are 400,000 fewer jobs available today than there were 6 years ago.

Unemployment benefits average \$300 per week and replace less than 50 percent of prior earnings. Yet these bene-

fits can make the difference between homelessness and hunger. They are often the only means of keeping a roof over one's head and putting food on the family table. For example, in 2012, unemployment benefits kept an estimated 2.5 million Americans, including 600,000 children, out of poverty.

It is also worth noting that unemployment benefits do more than provide a critical lifeline for out-of-work Americans. It is estimated that each dollar of unemployment insurance generates \$1.50 in new economic activity. This means our economy is losing \$400 million every week Congress refuses to extend these benefits.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office also estimates that the economy will lose 200,000 jobs if emergency unemployment insurance is not extended.

Unemployment insurance is a moral imperative that will also keep our economic recovery moving in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, we are a country of hardworking Americans. We must not turn our backs on those who need this critical Federal assistance as they struggle to find work.

□ 1815

I strongly urge Speaker BOEHNER and Leader CANTOR to schedule floor action on extending emergency unemployment insurance benefits without delay.

Mr. POCAN. Thank you so much.

It is so important to note that 37 percent of the people who receive these benefits have been searching for a job over 6 months, the very people who are going to be affected, 72,000 a week if this House doesn't act.

I now yield to another colleague, someone who has been a stalwart member of the Progressive Caucus, is the senior whip for the Democratic Caucus, and she is currently a member of the Judiciary Committee and the Homeland Security Committee and a strong advocate for people who are trying to lift themselves out of poverty and find opportunity in America.

It is my pleasure to yield to Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON LEE.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his kind leadership, because it is kind leadership, and I am very privileged to be very proudly a member of the Progressive Caucus, serving as the vice chair liaison on behalf of the Congressional Black Caucus to the Progressive Caucus and a member of the Executive Committee and have watched this caucus take on hard issues. First, of course, issues that dealt with the idea of minimum wage and the underpayment, if you will, of Federal contractors paying Federal employees who are contracted to them.

We have understood the distinction of the 99ers versus the 1 percent and waged a strong battle to make sure that the 99 percent were heard. So today, I want to join the gentleman and say that time is running out. Just

this week, as I indicated earlier today and the day before, those whose benefits were cut off on the 28th are receiving those notices or are receiving empty mailboxes just in time for the end of the month and the beginning of the monthly bills. Whether it is one's mortgage or rent, whether it is the utilities that one has to pay, whether it is care of one's elderly parent or children, I can assure you that the 1.3 million, 4,000 per week, 12,000 in Harris County, 66,000 in the State of Texas, are now confronting some very difficult times.

Now, I think it should be known that when we say the term "progressive," it is also a term that celebrates the greatness of America, its diversity, its opportunity and prosperity. I have not heard one of our members of the caucus in any way challenge prosperity, victory, or success. In fact, I am going to share with my colleagues what the Houston Chronicle put on the front page: "Sales of million-dollar homes snowball here."

That gives a false image of America, congratulating those citizens and families who are able because of the greatness of this Nation, because of the hard work of themselves and so many who contribute to the economy, because of the hard work of those who are now chronically unemployed or unemployed who contributed to society and want to contribute to society, they are able to be prosperous. It is good news for the real estate industry and my friends who are in that industry and good news for small businesses, but that clouds the issue and it allows people to falsely represent that all is well.

The chronically unemployed number in the United States is higher than it has ever been. It is 2.6 percent, juxtaposed against a 7 percent unemployment rate. It varies across America.

So I want to join the gentleman with a very loud, clarion voice, hopefully a voice of clarity, that you can have prosperity. We are a capitalistic society. There is good news in Houston. But at the same time, when I held an outreach press conference on December 31, fearing the worst, that there was a full house of people looking for work, people telling their stories of how long they looked for work, and the sadness of not being able to find work, and the faith community joining in and the social network community indicating they don't know how long they are going to last with this added number of individuals. Food banks, emergency food stamps and others, they didn't know how long they were going to last.

It is imperative that we have, within these hours, movement by the other body, which we congratulate for making the first step. But I would like to say this should be an emergency, an emergency vote for a 3-month extension and then the opportunity to go forward on a more deliberative analysis of how we can fund the rest of the time.

So I would hope—we voted today. Democrats voted to extend the unemployment. I hope that the Progressive Caucus' voice will be heard. I thank the gentleman because I want the 1.3 million and growing number to be able to have the same dignity as those who can celebrate the purchase of a million-dollar home, which we don't in any way challenge, but we realize that there are people who simply want to be able to make that rental payment or mortgage payment. They can do it. Although they are making ends meet, they can do it if we recognize the importance of giving them that transitional bridge. Pass the unemployment insurance benefit now.

Mr. POCAN. Thank you so much, Representative JACKSON LEE. I think you clearly explained the dilemma we have.

While the economy is slowly bouncing back—and this President has brought us from a 9.8 percent unemployment rate he inherited down to 7 percent—and jobs are slowly being created, we still are noticing that there are still people being left behind. We have to recognize that as well.

I believe Secretary Robert Reich wrote a piece that appeared today that explained that so well. Unfortunately, due to income inequality, the gap of the percentage of people who are poor, are working but still are not earning enough, we need to talk about that as well.

I now yield to another one of my colleagues, one of my freshman colleagues who in fact has been elected by our Democratic class as the freshman class president. He serves on the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform where he is the ranking member on the Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Job Creation and Regulatory Affairs, and is also on the Committee on Natural Resources. It is my honor to yield to Representative MATT CARTWRIGHT from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CARTWRIGHT. I thank my valued and trusted colleague from Wisconsin for granting me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise as a Congressman from Pennsylvania, in fact, a Congressman from Scranton, Pennsylvania, the birthplace of Secretary Robert Reich, I might add, someone we are very proud of. And I am very proud myself to be a member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, and I rise here to speak in support of a reasonable extension for UI benefits with no strings attached.

I say "no strings attached" because every time we have extended long-term UI benefits, we have done so with no strings attached, no political wrangling, no arm wrestling. "No strings attached" means no conditions whatsoever. It is the right thing to do because you have to do it in a situation like this. In fact, five times during the George W. Bush administration, this Nation extended UI benefits on an emergency basis with no strings attached, and I see no reason why we have to depart from this American precedent today.

I understand, Mr. Speaker, the importance of fiscal responsibility. It is not like there is only one party that understands fiscal responsibility. We get that on this side of the aisle, and we get that in the Congressional Progressive Caucus as well. But the question is of timing. We want to balance the budget. We want to pay down the national debt. We get why those things are important, and we know that UI benefits can't last forever.

But the fact of the matter is it is an emergency now. As our dear friend, the gentlelady from Texas just styled it, it is an emergency now. The reason it is an emergency is the vast number of American citizens who are long-term unemployed. Mr. Speaker, 1.3 million on December 28 got cut off. In my own district in northeastern Pennsylvania, over 6,000 families got cut off on December 28, 3 days after Christmas.

The fact of the matter is this is not American tradition. Since 1959, we have never ended long-term UI benefits at a time when so many Americans are long-term unemployed. The gentlelady from Houston just mentioned it is 2.6 percent long-term unemployed in this country right now. Every other time we have cut off long-term UI benefits, it has been at a time when the people who are long-term unemployed are way less of a percentage. I think the previous highest percentage was 1.3 percent, in other words, half the percentage that we have now. Now is not the right time to cut off people from long-term UI benefits.

Mr. Speaker, these are real people we are talking about. Before my voice entirely gives out, I want to read to you a letter I got from a lady named Carol Blankenhorn from Schuylkill Haven in Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania, which I proudly represent. Carol writes:

I am writing because I am a single unemployed mother that does not get any child support and have been supporting myself and my son up until my territory at my job was dissolved. I have been very diligent in my job search, but to no avail. I believed that at least I had 26 weeks of standard benefits, but the emergency extension is so crucial to me and others because of the poor economy and the lack of jobs. I have now received a notice of exhaustion for benefits in 3 weeks, and I am devastated. I am not one of those people that are sitting back collecting. I couldn't live with myself. But now as I sit and look at my son 1 week before Christmas, I am beside myself and have no idea how I am to survive. I am urging you to please extend and renew emergency Federal extended unemployment benefits. In closing, I would ask you to please respond to me of your views and intentions on this very important issue.

That was Carol Blankenhorn, a real person from Schuylkill Haven, Pennsylvania. These are real people we are talking about. Leaving aside the damage to the economy of stopping UI benefits at this point, leaving aside all of the economic realities that favor extending UI benefits, remember above all, we are talking about real people and real families; and that alone, in the dead of winter, is a great argument

not to cut people off UI benefits at a time when it is next to impossible to find another job.

I thank the gentleman.

Mr. POCAN. Thank you so much, Representative CARTWRIGHT, for not only your long-time advocacy on behalf of so many people, but for sharing the personal stories, because I think that is what matters the most.

Mr. Speaker, how much time is remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ROTHFUS). The gentleman has 7 minutes remaining.

Mr. POCAN. I have all sorts of stories that I would read but I don't have time to from construction workers who are out of work and need these benefits, from machinists who are out of work, a surgical nurse in Baraboo, Wisconsin. There are so many people who need these benefits, and the very stories that Representative CARTWRIGHT shared, I just have pages of these stories of people across the country who need these benefits to continue to get by while they are looking for work. They are not lazy. They are not sitting back. They want to work. And in this economy, they are doing everything they can to try to, but the economy is not ready for some of these people and we have to do everything we can.

I do want to read one story. I had an opportunity this afternoon to meet with a constituent from Reedsburg, Wisconsin. She was recently the winner of Half in Ten's Our American Story: 50th Anniversary of the War on Poverty Storytelling Contest. Her name is Amy Treptow. She was here with her daughter, Anna. She has benefited from programs that we have put together for people who are lower income. I will read her words:

I have always worked hard and played by the rules, but I was still living on the brink of poverty. My story is the story of millions in today's economy in which there aren't enough jobs and/or adequate training for the ones that are available. The basic need for more good jobs and training programs seems to be overlooked in today's conversation about poverty.

I am a veteran and a divorced mother with two children. I went to school to become an elementary schoolteacher but wasn't able to find full-time employment, so I enrolled in a skills enhancement program at my local community action agency in Wisconsin. The program assists low-income adults that are working a minimum of 20 hours per week to gain job skills in order to be able to have a job that pays a living wage with health benefits.

□ 1830

I was working as a contract teacher making \$15,184 a year, which is far below the poverty line for a family of three. Once I enrolled in the program, I started to take coursework to get certified as a reading specialist. The program helped me with the tuition and other school expenses and provided me with case management services. I was also living in section 8 housing and received housing counseling, as well as participating in the agency's Family Self-Sufficiency Program. I am now a full-time employee with benefits as a reading specialist instructor

helping low-income children, along with two other jobs, and I now own my own home.

And she goes on.

By providing these safety nets, the very safety nets that we celebrated yesterday on the 50-year anniversary of the war on poverty, we have helped someone like Amy and her family lift themselves out of poverty, but we have to do that right now in helping others.

I would like to, at this point, yield some time to my colleague from Illinois, someone who has been a mentor to me my entire career in the legislature, and so glad to serve with her now in Congress, a very staunch Progressive, Representative JAN SCHAKOWSKY from the State of Illinois.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded not to traffic the well while another Member is under recognition.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. If that referred to me, I apologize.

Thank you very much for organizing this hour for the Progressive Caucus.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about human issues that really don't lend themselves to any kind of political label. We are talking about people. And I think this is what has hurt me so much is the meanness, the meanness.

I just celebrated my 15th year here in the House of Representatives, and I have to tell you that we have disagreed across the aisle on a lot of different things, but the demonization of people who are struggling just to live a decent life. We are talking about people when we talk about the unemployed who aren't looking for the huge fancy job. They want to make enough to be able to raise their children comfortably, to be able to eat, put a roof over their head, just modest things that add up to a decent life.

Aside from all the arguments on why it is really dumb economically to not extend those unemployment benefits, that it will actually cost us jobs, 250,000—I don't know what the estimate is—if we don't put money in people's pockets that they can go out and spend, why would things that used to have a bipartisan consensus not prevail today?

In 1959, 1962, 1973, 1977, 1985, 1994, and 2003, we extended unemployment insurance benefits until the level of long-term unemployment—those are people unemployed over 6 months—fell below 1.5 percent. Today that is 2.6 percent of Americans. That is over 1 million Americans.

What are we doing? Who are we? That is what I asked myself around the holidays. We had a lot of cold weather and snow—typical Chicago in some ways—and people are celebrating and still going out and shopping and Christmas lights and Christmas trees. I was picturing—I know some of those families for whom this was so bleak and so unnecessary—that we could have, in 5 minutes before we left here, just extended those unemployment insurance benefits.

And you've got that sign there that says: Each week that we fail to act,

72,000 more people—that is a pretty hefty small town of people—will lose their benefits, people who only are qualified for those benefits if they are seeking work, three people searching for every job that is available in this country.

You talked to people who have experienced this ultimate sense of insecurity: What is going to happen to me and my family? What I hear at the end of that story when I talk to people is: I don't know what I am going to do. I don't know what I am going to do.

For many people, the fear of homelessness is just right outside their door right now. I don't get it.

We celebrated the—and I mean celebrated—the 50th anniversary of the announcement of the war on poverty and all the things that we did and that were supported for many years.

Thank you.

Mr. POCAN. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

HEALTH EXCHANGE SECURITY AND TRANSPARENCY ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. WAGNER) for 30 minutes.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. WAGNER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

Mrs. WAGNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Health Exchange Security and Transparency Act, a bill that forces the Federal Government to notify individuals if their personal information has been stolen or unlawfully accessed through an ObamaCare exchange.

Since the disastrous rollout of ObamaCare on October 1, we have heard story after story, Mr. Speaker, of security threats and privacy concerns with the troubled ObamaCare insurance exchanges, from the chief information officer at CMS claiming that “there is also no confidence that personally identifiable information will be protected,” to an administrator at CMS saying that the ObamaCare Web site “exposed a level of uncertainty that can be deemed as high risk,” to a computer security expert calling the ObamaCare Web site “a hacker's dream.”

It is clear that the ObamaCare exchanges were never ready to be launched, and it is unconscionable that this administration would expose millions of Americans' personal information to cyber threats and identity theft.

To make matters worse, there are laws already implemented that require

private companies to notify innocent victims of these security breaches. But President Obama didn't think it was necessary to live by the same rules as the private sector and decided to push his failed agenda despite senior government officials warning him that his Web site was not safe for the American people.

Every day, Mr. Speaker, I hear from far too many hardworking families in Missouri's Second District who have seen their premiums skyrocket, wages decreased, insurance coverage canceled of late, and hours cut back at work. These families are already suffering from the harsh realities of ObamaCare. To make matters worse, they have no idea whether their personal information has been stolen or not.

Just recently, Mary Ann Schaeffer wrote to me from Kirkwood, Missouri, about how worried she is that her most intimate information could be stolen from the ObamaCare exchanges. And I quote from Mary Ann Schaeffer of Kirkwood, Missouri: “I am concerned about the security of my sensitive medical records in a big government database.” Mary Ann is just one of the many people I hear from in the St. Louis region that are worried about the devastating consequences of ObamaCare.

The only way to truly protect the American people from ObamaCare is by replacing it with free market-based solutions that expand access without destroying our economy, putting the Federal Government between you and your doctor, and lowering the quality of our care. The Federal Government, Mr. Speaker, should, at the very least, be required to report any security breaches on the ObamaCare Web site to those innocent victims who, through no fault of their own, trusted a government that deceived them.

Since President Obama decided to delay the implementation of ObamaCare for unions and businesses for an entire year, don't you think the least he could do is tell hardworking Americans if their personal information has been stolen or breached?

Mr. Speaker, the simple truth is: ObamaCare is wrong for the American people, it is wrong for hardworking Missourians, and it is wrong for the people of Missouri's Second Congressional District, and it needs to be replaced immediately before any more of its harmful provisions are implemented.

I urge my colleagues to vote “yes,” a resounding “yes,” on this common-sense measure.

I would now, Mr. Speaker, yield to my good friend, the gentlelady from Tennessee, Representative DIANE BLACK, who has not only spent countless hours championing the Health Exchange Security and Transparency Act, but who has tirelessly worked to improve our Nation's health care as a small business woman and a nurse in Tennessee and now as a Member of Congress.